PENNSYLVANIA STATE LIBRARY
DOCUMENTS SECTION

The Pennsylvania State Archives

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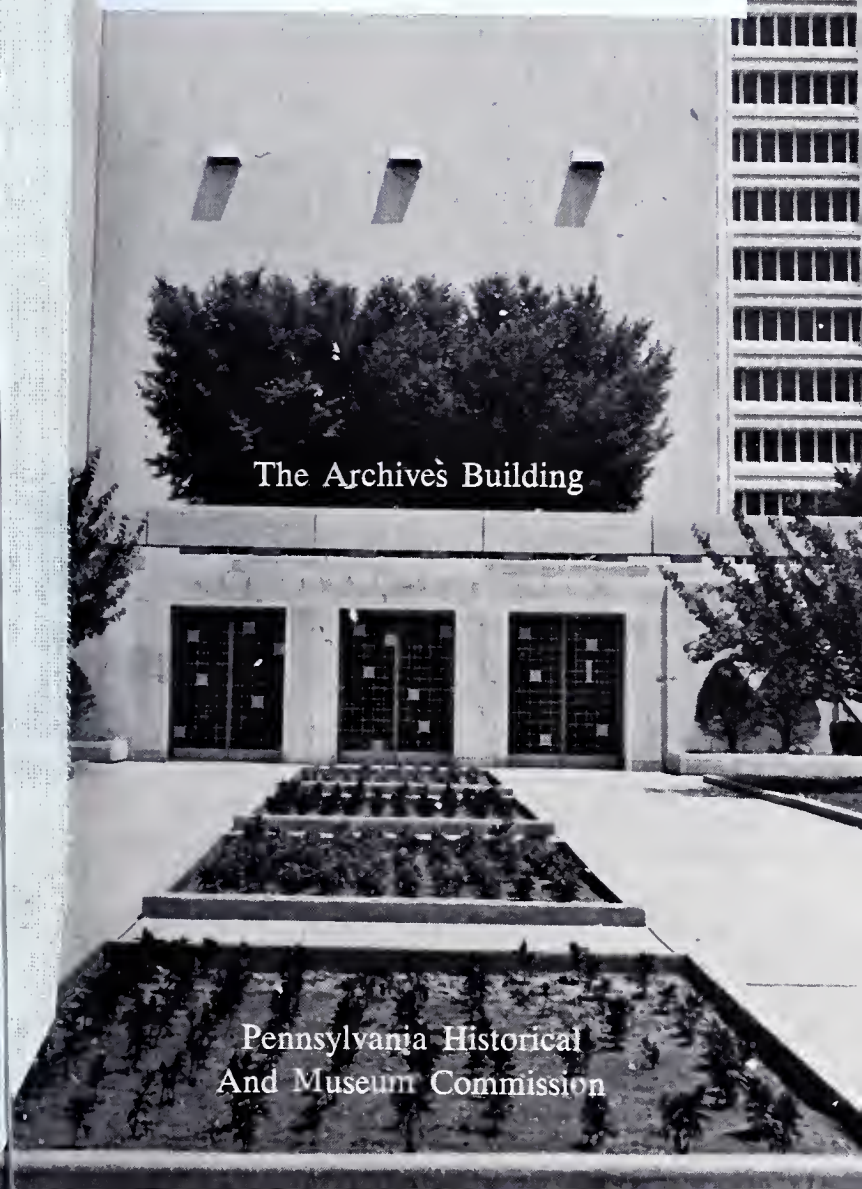


The Archives Building

Pennsylvania Historical
And Museum Commission

PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES

THE Pennsylvania State Archives was established in 1903 as an administrative unit of the State Library and was combined in 1945 with the State Museum and the Pennsylvania Historical Commission to form the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The primary function of the State Archives (known officially as the Division of Archives and Manuscripts) is to acquire, preserve, and make available for study the permanently valuable public records of the Commonwealth, with particular attention to be given to the records of State government. In fulfilling its general responsibility for the preservation of historic documents, the State Archives also acquires and preserves private papers relevant to Pennsylvania history.

The Archives moved into a new facility in the William Penn Memorial Museum and Archives Building in 1964. Located at the corner of Third and Forster streets in Harrisburg, the Archives complex includes staff offices and processing areas, a search room, and a twenty-one-story records tower. All stack areas are air-conditioned with controls for maintaining the proper temperature and humidity. This facility, which is presently shared with the State Records Center, contains space for the storage of approximately one hundred fifteen thousand cubic feet of records.

The State Archives is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 to 5, except on State legal holidays. Its holdings, consisting of some twenty-eight thousand cubic feet of research materials, may be used by all responsible researchers who register at the search room, and who adhere to the stated regulations pertaining to the use of the records. Photocopying services (xerographic and photostatic copies, photographic prints, and microfilm) are available to facilitate the work of the researcher. Records under donor-imposed restrictions are available only with the expressed approval of the donor.

HOLDINGS

ARCHIVES-MANUSCRIPTS

Covering the period from 1664 to the present, forty-five record groups include records from most departments, boards, and commissions of the executive branch, as well as records from the legislative and judicial branches. Major record groups include Proprietary Government, 1664-1776; Department of State, 1681-1975; Department of Forests and Waters, 1727-1971; Supreme and Superior Courts, 1740-1965; Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Governments, 1775-1790; General Assembly, 1776-1974; Department of Military Affairs, 1791-1950; Justice Department, 1814-1970; W.P.A. Pennsylvania Historical Survey, 1933-1942; Public Utility Commission, 1919-1955; Department of Public Instruction, 1854-1971; and the Department of Public Welfare, 1882-1967.

Two hundred fifty-four manuscript groups contain the records and papers of prominent individuals and families, business concerns, and numerous social, cultural, political, and military organizations relating to almost every aspect of Pennsylvania history. Included among these records are special collections of maps, posters, postcards, photographs, and motion picture films.

MAPS

A large quantity of maps is preserved in several collections. The maps, dating from 1681 to the present, are mainly State road and turnpike, political subdivision and boundary, and military maps. Also available are photocopies of maps relating to the Commonwealth collected from depositories throughout the United States and Canada.

GENEALOGICAL RECORDS

Records of specific genealogical interest include passenger lists, primarily of German and Swiss arrivals at the port of Philadelphia, 1727-1808; official naturalization lists, 1740-1773; oaths of allegiance, 1777-1790; septennial census returns, 1779-1863; naturalization papers of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court, 1794-1868; and records relating to military service. Available on microfilm are certain records of seventeen counties, which include wills, deeds, and tax lists, and copies of the general federal census schedules for Pennsylvania, 1800-1880, and the special schedule of 1890.

Pennsylvania Canal at Port Treverton, 1898

MILITARY SERVICE RECORDS

Official records relating to service with Pennsylvania military units covering the period 1775-1945 are found among the records of the Departments of Military Affairs, Treasury, Auditor General, and State, the Office of the Comptroller General, and Pennsylvania's Revolutionary Governments. They consist primarily of muster rolls, bonus files, pension records, commissions, and military accounts. A small quantity of records pertaining to military service during the Provincial period can be found among the records of the Provincial Council.

TRANSPORTATION

Official records relating to transportation include the internal improvements files, 1777-1902, of the Departments of State, Treasury, Auditor General, and the Office of the Comptroller General, which consist mainly of reports, accounts, and correspondence concerning roads and turnpikes, river improvements, and bridge companies; annual reports of canal and navigation companies and railroads, 1859-1965; Board of Canal Commissioners records, 1816-1868, containing minutes, surveys, correspondence, and map books of the Pennsylvania Canal; Highway Department records which include road and turnpike maps, 1706-1873, and toll bridge company records, 1812-1961; and Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission records consisting mainly of the records of the South Pennsylvania Railroad Company, 1881-1909. Private collections include records of the Schuylkill Navigation Company, Union Canal Company (Historical Society of Berks County deposit), Susquehannah Canal Company, Fall Brook Railroad Company, Berks and Dauphin Turnpike Road Company, and the Cornwall and Lebanon Railroad; and the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania Collection, which alone contains several hundred cubic feet of research materials pertaining to Pennsylvania railroads.

FOREST HISTORY

Among the records relating to forestry are the papers of, or relating to, such prominent conservationists and foresters as J. Horace McFarland, John M. Phillips, Mira Lloyd Dock, and George H. Wirt. Corporate records include the Wheeler and Dusenbury Lumber Company Records, the Barclay Family Papers, and the Emporium Lumber Company Records. Reports and correspondence of foresters and forest rangers, 1902-1921, and minutes and reports of the Bureau of Parks, 1924-1941, are included among the records of the Department of Forests and Waters.

GOVERNORS' PAPERS

Complimenting the official records of State government are the papers of Pennsylvania governors, which are mainly the records of the administrations of ten twentieth-century chief executives. These collections consist primarily of records created during their terms of office, and therefore provide a large quantity of material for the study of many subjects relating to Pennsylvania government. Governors' papers prior to the administration of Daniel H. Hastings (1895-1899) are fragmentary, and contain few documents. Collections beginning with the papers of John S. Fine (1951-1955) are currently restricted, except for the David L. Lawrence Papers (1959-1963).

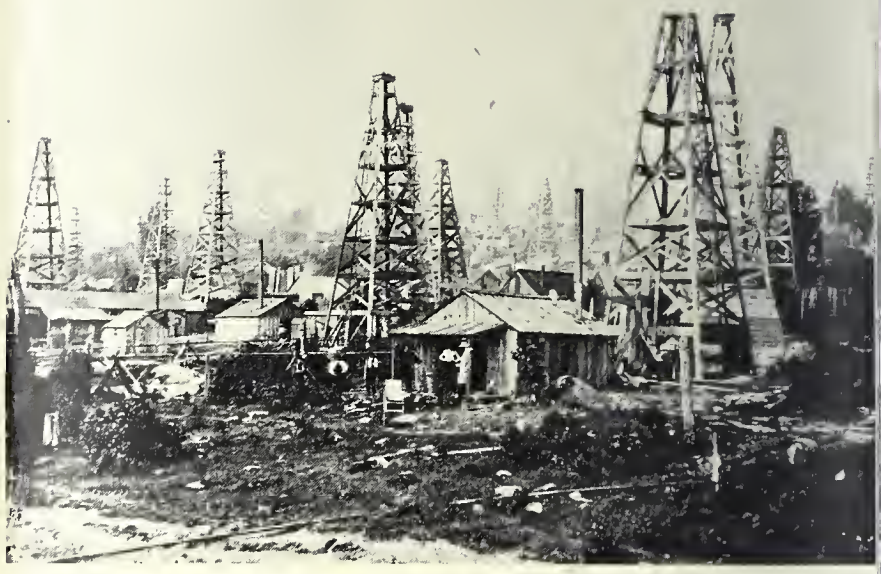
Papers of, or relating to, Pennsylvania governors filed among the records of the Department of State include executive minute books, 1790-1943; letter books, 1790-1861; and executive correspondence, 1790-1951.

INDUSTRIAL RECORDS

Several collections provide large quantities of records relating to the early iron and coal industries in the Commonwealth. Foremost in quantity and completeness are records of the iron furnaces operated by the Coleman family of Lebanon County (Lebanon County Historical Society deposit), which include operational records of the Cornwall Ore Banks. Other large manuscript groups are the Pine Grove Furnace Collection, Curtin Iron Works Papers, and the Fall Brook Coal Company Records. Correspondence of mine inspectors, 1903-1931, inspection registers, 1899-1920, accident registers, 1899-1972, and mine disaster files, 1939-1964, are included in the records of the Department of Mines and Mineral Industries.

PROVINCIAL AND REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD

Records of the colonial and revolutionary governments include minutes, correspondence, and related files of the Provincial Council, 1664-1775; the Committee of Safety, 1775-1776; the Council of Safety, 1776-1777; and the Supreme Executive Council, 1777-1790. Basic documents such as the Penn Charter, the Constitution of 1776, Indian deeds, and original laws are part of the records of the Department of State. Other groups include records of the Port of Philadelphia, from 1727 on; minutes and papers of the Pennsylvania Court of Admiralty, 1780-1788; Courts of Oyer and Terminer papers, 1757-1827; records of the High Court of Errors and Appeals, 1780-1808; forfeited estate files, 1777-1791; minute books and files of the General Assembly, 1776-1790; minutes of the Constitutional Convention of 1776; rent rolls, 1683-1776, and quit rent books, 1741-1776, of the Land Office; and financial records of the Office of the Comptroller General dating back to 1762. Most prominent of the manuscript collections are the Sequestered Baynton-Wharton-Morgan Papers, 1725-1827, and the Sequestered John Nicholson Papers, 1756-1852.



Oil Wells, Venango County, 1869

PHOTOGRAPHS

The Archives has accessioned large quantities of photographs from both private and official sources. The Philadelphia Commercial Museum Photographic Collection, the Harrisburg Home Star Collection, the Warren J. Harder Collection, the William W. Stoey Collection, and a general photograph collection supplement the large photographic files originally maintained by the Departments of Highways, Commerce, and Forests and Waters. Related to these materials is a picture postcard collection, primarily of town, building, bridge and stream, and commercial and industrial scenes.

MICROFILM-PHOTOSTAT COLLECTIONS

Available for use at the Archives are collections of research materials, the originals of which are in other depositories or in private hands. Among these is a microfilm collection of significant runs of newspapers from most Pennsylvania counties. Microfilm and photostatic copies of family papers,

diaries, early periodicals, and business records supplement the collections of public records and historical manuscripts.

SPECIAL STUDIES

The Archives offers research opportunities for those interested in the study of ethnic and racial groups and women's history. A substantial and growing oral history collection documents the experience of miners and industrial workers in the Commonwealth. Individual collections of personal papers, organizational records, runs of foreign-language newspapers, and church anniversary histories are part of a general ethnic studies collection. Private papers relating to women include the Gertrude Howard Nauman Papers, Liliane Stevens Howard Collection, Mira Lloyd Dock Papers, Orbison Family Papers, Millicent Barton Rex Collection, and the Richmond (Mansfield) Ladies Soldiers Aid Society Papers.

SOCIAL WELFARE

Official records of the Archives reflect the concern of State government with the health and welfare of its citizens. Records of this description include minutes and related files of the State Board of (Motion Picture) Censors, 1915-1956; records of the 1972 Abortion Law Commission; charitable solicitations registration files, 1924-1961; reports on county homes and poor relief, 1917-1939; secretary's file and institutional population records of the Committee on Lunacy, 1882-1921; records of the Office of the Aging, 1954-1962; State Emergency Relief Administration records, 1932-1937; minutes of the State Board of Public Assistance, 1937-1959; records of the Eastern State Penitentiary, Western State Penitentiary, and other penal institutions, 1818-1961; clemency files, 1777-1900; Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board legal files, 1937-1968; and records of the Pennsylvania State Police, 1905-1964.

MAILING ADDRESS

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